1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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either by Madras Presidency officials or by the special staff deputed for this purpose to the Orissa hill tracts of the prevalence of this practice in Bastar. In consequence, at the instance of the British Resident at Nagpur Lal Dalganjan Singh was summoned to Nagpur in 1842 and examined, and a guard of Nagpur Raj police was stationed at Dantewara to prevent human sacrifices in the temple of the State goddess Danteshwari. But it was never proved that such sacrifices had ever taken place. Writing in 1862 after a prolonged tour in Bastar and after special enquiries into this matter in both Kalahandi and Bastar States, of which as Deputy Commissioner of Sironcha he was then in political charge, Captain C. Glasfurd stated that the guard had continued to be posted at Dantewara ever since 1842, and that 'even if the abominable rite ever existed, which is doubtful, it has altogether fallen into disuse'. The matter is not really relevant to the subject of this book, save that to these suspicions were due the first visits of British officials to the State, and the ultimate decision to insist on Raja Bhairon Deo accepting officials from British India as his Diwans. I personally doubt whether such sacrifices ever took place; if they did they were semi-State ceremonies connected with the Raja's yearly Dasehra celebrations, the celebrants were Telangas, and the Marias had nothing to do with them.[1] In actual fact, despite many past

[1] It is so commonly asserted that these sacrifices were prevalent in Bastar at Dantewara that it is of interest to note the evidence. The 1842 action of the Nagpur Raj was based merely on a few hearsay reports collected through the Agency for the Orissa Hill Tracts, to the effect that victims were kidnapped from outside Bastar, that in Bastar often twenty men were sacrificed at a time, the worst case being said to have been the sacrifice in 1826 of twenty-five or twenty-seven men by the Bastar Raja before setting out on a visit to His Highness the Raja of Nagpur, which was still referred to in 1838 as 'the great sacrifice'; the latter report, however, goes on in the usual *cause ignotum pro magnifico* strain that then and now distinguishes outside Hindu statements about the 'wild jungles' of 'Kankeri-Bastar', to suggest that the practice was rife also in Kanker and adjoining tracts north of Bastar, and that 'in some of the wilder jungles bordering on Chhattisgarh the Gonds add cannibalism to this horrid deed and eat the flesh by sacrifice'. Captain J. MacVicar, the Agent in the Orissa Hill Tracts, in 1855 visited Bastar, saw the Raja and the Lal and visited Dantewara to test the truth of various reports. Beyond the grovelling terror which the goddess Danteshwari inspired throughout the parts visited by him, and the assertions of a man in his camp that sacrificers had recently tried to kidnap him, and of a woman that six years before a man had been sacrificed during some disturbances by the Lal Sahib's orders, he left nothing on record to justify his conclusion that it was beyond all doubt that human sacrifices had never ceased to be offered in spite of the orders of the Nagpur Darbar and successive British Residents at Nagpur. Had he found any real evidence, it is scarcely conceivable that action would not have been taken against the Raja and the Lal Sahib. Actually, all that was done was a visit late that year from Lieut. C. Elliot, the Deputy Commissioner of Raipur, who made no further enquiries, but substituted for the old police guard guards of entirely Mussalman police at Jagdalpur and Dantewara, and straitly warned the Raja that he must do his

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175 assertions to the contrary, and although it was almost an article of faith with the Political Department of the Central Provinces that Danteshwari was the chief and most dreaded goddess of all the peoples of Bastar and that her high priest the Jia of Dantewara was the one man who could influence the 'wild Maria tribes', yet she is almost unknown to the Marias of the Abujhmar hills save in a village or two on the Dantewara edge of the hills, while even the more sophisticated Bison-horn Marias of the Dantewara tahsil pay only nominal respect to the goddess in villages where a thatched temple has been erected in her name by non-Maria settlers. The Jia may have influence over the Jhari Telanga and Halba residents of Dantewara tahsil; over the Marias he has none. Hindu State

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782 utmost to suppress the rite and to establish a more just system of administration. In 1859 the same officer, now Captain Elliot, informed the Raja of the intention of the Commissioner of the Nagpur Province to recommend the extension to Bastar of the operations of the Agent for the Orissa Hill Tracts for enquiring into the prevalence of human sacrifice; but the Raja protested again, as always before, that no such thing had ever occurred; and Captain Elliot stated that he had never had any report of any sacrifice, nor had anything ever come to his notice by rumour or otherwise to lead him to believe that such a thing had happened since the province had come under British rule. No action seems to have been taken, and in 1862 Captain Glasfurd, whose personal opinion has been quoted above to the effect that it was doubtful if such sacrifices had ever taken place, reported that no special agency was necessary for this purpose in Bastar beyond the temple guard. Even this police guard was discontinued in 1863, and five years later the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces reported to the Government of India that there had been no practice of human sacrifice in the Central Provinces 'of late years, if indeed within the memory of man'.

There was thus never a single authenticated instance of human sacrifice in Bastar. Nearly all the stories emanated from Jeypore, the Maharaja of which was at bitter enmity with the Chief of Bastar. In fact, the latter frequently protested that the Jeypore Maharaja was the source of these slanders.

In 1885-6 the whole question was revived in consequence of alarming reports emanating from the Madras police in Jeypore of gangs of Bastar kidnappers being abroad in Jeypore looking for victims for sacrifice at Dantewara. Initial enquiries by Sardar Rattan Singh, the Raipur District Superintendent of Police, suggested that the reports were fabrications and that there was not the slightest particle of evidence to implicate the Bastar authorities. While the enquiries were in progress, the Madras authorities were scared by a further report that an excise peon had been kidnapped near the Bastar border, and urged the immediate despatch of police and troops into Bastar. The Jeypore District Superintendent of Police with some Jeypore police, and the Political Agent of the Chhattisgarh States with fifty military police, proceeded at once to Bastar. Masses of statements were taken implying the existence of a regular organization to kidnap victims and keep them in various hiding-places till wanted for sacrifice; it was suggested that in twelve villages the ryots held their land free of land revenue for the service of kidnapping victims. No proof could be obtained of these allegations, and not one of the alleged hiding-places was traced. Though Raja Bhairon Deo was removed from the State during the enquiry, nothing was found to implicate him. There was not any evidence of Bastar having caused the disappearance of the persons alleged to have been kidnapped from Jeypore. In consequence of

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officials incline to claim the aboriginals as Hindus and to deprecate census classification of their religion as animistic or tribal. It has always been easy for such persons to identify the Maria's cult of the Earth or *Bhum* in its aryanized form Mati Deo with Mata or Mai, of whom Danteshwari is the Bastar incarnation; and another source of confusion has been the presence in every aboriginal village of a *gudi* (hedge-temple) or other rough shrine of the *Nar Taluri* ('Village Mother'), known to the Hindus as Gāon Devī, and easily identified with Mata Devi or Maoli. Actually the Marias, whether of the Abujhmar hills or Bison-horn, do not even know Dantewara by that name, but by its older and pre-Danteshwari name of Jatawada.

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various statements made, Shamsundar, the Jia or hereditary high priest of the Dantewara temple, the representative of a Rajput family that by tradition had come from Warangal with Raja Annam Deo, was committed for trial on a charge of murdering a Parja who was proved to have disappeared from a Bastar village in 1883, and it was alleged that the Jia had confessed that he had sacrificed him. The Commissioner of Chhattisgarh, Mr. Chisholm, tried the case as Sessions Judge. The Jia had all along refused to sign the confession and stated that he had only said what he did to avoid the indignity of handcuffs. The other witnesses alleged that the statements made in the enquiry had been false, and inspired by fear of the Jeypore police, who had grossly ill-treated them. The Judge held that the witnesses had deliberately made false and tutored statements under the influence of threats, and that the prosecution case completely failed. The Jia was therefore acquitted. In his report to the Chief Commissioner, he said that he considered that the Raja had been wrongly accused, that there was no proof that any human sacrifices had been offered in recent years in Bastar, and that there was scarcely anything tangible enough to justify even suspicion. This view was accepted by the Chief Commissioner, though he was still doubtful about the Jia's confession, which had contained new details of the alleged sacrifice not given by other witnesses, since he considered the Jia too intelligent to be thrown off his balance by a threat of being handcuffed. The kidnapping scare, he pointed out, could be paralleled by various examples in other parts of India, and it was natural for popular rumour to attribute the several disappearances to agents kidnapping victims for Danteshwari because of the old tradition of such sacrifices, while there was nothing strange about disappearances in a country swarming like Bastar with tiger; but there was bound to remain some suspicion over the purpose of attempts that were proved to have been made to kidnap various persons.

In Dantewara they will still show you where the police dug in vain near the temples for the skeletons of the alleged victims, but found not a bone to substantiate the stories of the informers. There were no villages held revenue-free, and no cages for the destined victims. So far as the older inhabitants remember the enquiry, they think the Raja was badly treated. There is no one who even now can give any information about human sacrifices in former days; they deny that there ever were any. Certainly the Meriah rite was never celebrated in Bastar.

Old rumours die hard: in 1913 the Madras police interested themselves in the matter once again, when an Inspector reported his personal belief that the sacrifices still took place at the occasional visits of the late Raja Rudra Pratap Deo to Dantewara, and that a sacrifice was likely at his then impending visit, as he had no son to succeed him! This was at a time when the Raja had lost his powers after the 1910 rebellion and had to follow the advice of a resident European Diwan.

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in the same *padar*, and here he was able to dig a hole without any root growing across it; a few roots at the side of the hole did not matter, and the finding of a stone when the hole was half dug was considered lucky. In this hole he planted a pole of *saja* wood with a forked top, to one arm of which he had tied a bundle of thatching grass, and after filling in the hole around it with earth he sprinkled some grains of rice in two heaps in front of the pole in the name of the Village Mother, the clan-god and the local spirits. The next morning he came with the elders to inspect the two heaps of grain, and as he found them scattered about, he had to dig a fresh hole exactly as before, plant the *saja* pole in it, and lay two heaps of grain again in front of it. Next morning they found the two heaps undisturbed, and so considered that the omens favoured this as the village site. The *saja* pole was left there to serve as one of the supports for the roof-tree of the *parma's* house, and the building of the new village was begun without further ceremony. Had the heaps of grain been found again disturbed, they would have decided against that *padar* and tested the omens in the same way in another *padar*. A sacrifice to the Village Mother and the Earth (*Bhum*) had preceded the actual settling in the new site.

On page 121 are a rough sketch and ground-plan of a typical Bison-horn Maria house in the village of Telam in Kuakonda *pargana*. The inner house, consisting of the *wijja-lon* ('seed-house') in the rear, and the *narma-lon* ('middle house') in front of it, is made first; and then the *oser* ('veranda') is added, with slightly lower eaves. Though from indoors the *oser* seems just an integral part of the house, the different levels of the eaves make the house look from the outside like two card houses built on different levels. Sometimes also a second or even a third *oser* has subsequently been built on to the first, each with lower eaves, increasing still further the card house appearance. The thatch is of forest grasses or of the dwarf palms (*Phoenix sylvestris* and *Phoenix farinifera*) which are such common features of the undergrowth of the Bastar forests, and is neater than the thatch of Hill Maria houses. The doors are usually pieces of bamboo wicker-work sliding between pairs of vertical posts, like the doors of the Hill Maria houses; but sometimes the sections of wicker-work are hinged on to a doorpost by knotted pieces of split bamboo. In the richer and more advanced villages, wooden doors and padlocks are not unknown.

Houses

The *wijja-lon*, like the Hill Maria's *lons*, is used both as a store-room and for the cult of the Departed. There being no pile granaries or long granaries, the year's harvest, not only of grain but also of forest produce, is stored in the *wijja-lon*, and so a storage platform

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thongs of the outer rind of bamboos. Where *saja* trees are scarce, he may be made entirely of bamboos, but will be lodged in a hut under a *saja* tree. The junctions of the logs and the cross-pieces are adorned with bunches of peacock and jungle-cock feathers, and the ends of the logs with rupees or spirals of peacock quill or bands of brass and silver. At the first-fruits ceremonies his shed is adorned with plaited fringes of the stalks and ears of the new grains, or bunches of bean and pulse pods; and he is brought forth to have the blood of the sacrificed victims sprinkled upon him.

Halbas, Telangas and Murias have precisely similar gods, if the logs composing them are more elaborately adorned and sometimes carved. Their generic name in Bastar is Anga Deo or Pat Deo, 'Log-God'. The central log is the essential part, for the other two logs are added primarily to enable the god to be borne on the shoulders of four men when he goes forth to a festival or a witch hunt. The Jhoria log-god at Narainpur had a special nose for witches, and the late Raja Bhairam Deo, great-grandfather of the present Maharaja, installed a copy of it in the palace at Jagdalpur; for witch hunts the god used to be brought in from Narainpur while the palace copy was sent to Narainpur during his absence. I found that the palace copy was in 1927 being used generally without reference to the Narainpur prototype for detecting witchcraft around Jagdalpur, a fee of Rs. 5 being paid into the State Treasury to the credit of the Temple Court of Wards whenever surrounding Murias requisitioned its services.

As has been observed on page 51, there is a tradition among the Hill Marias (of Chhota Dongar, Mangnar and Barsur Mar *parganas*) that the great log-god Pat Raja of the Jate clan of Mohnar in Mangnar *pargana* with the help of his wife's brother, Use Modia, the log-god of the Lekami clan of the Bison-horn village of Ghotpal, near Barsur, divided up both Hill and Bison-horn Marias into clans, in the old days when there was regular intermarriage between the Hill and Bison-horn Marias. The legend does not appear to be known to the latter, who have only vague traditions of having at some remote date descended to their present lands from the Abujhmar hills, where occasionally they say that their clan-god still resides.

It is certain that most of the Hill Maria clan-gods have relationship claimed for them with Pat Raja of Mohnar. The Usendi clan of Orcha has his younger brother Wikir Hunga at Japgunda, the Deda clan of Kurmer have another younger brother, Nule Harma, the Dhurwa clan of Gomagal have his sister Oghal Mutta'i, the Hill Maria Marvi clan of Toqtoli in Mangnar *pargana* have his sister's son Mara-Magh, while the Gume clan of the Barsur Mar

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continue their old habit (shared by the Baigas and most of the Orissa tribes) of wiping themselves with leaves after defecation. This custom, along with beef-eating and the breeding of domestic pigs, appears to worry that slightly ludicrous figure, the pious social reformer, far more than more obvious social evils. In Orissa, for example, earnest attempts have been made to induce the Bondos, of all people, to use water after defecation. A few have begun to do so, using the village stream (sole source of water-supply) as a latrine: the only result of these rather pathetic endeavours at 'improvement' has been to make the water-supply of a few aboriginal villages as filthy as that of many 'advanced' areas. As a comment on this curious belief that a change in defecatory habits indicates an advance in culture, I note that in a famous Indian Public School, new boys are greeted with the question, 'Do you wash or wipe?' If a boy 'washes' he is regarded as coming from a definitely inferior social stratum.

Page 69, *line* 31. The multiple cord belt is not worn by Gadaba women, as Glasfurd says, nor by the Bondos, as Hutton says at page xiv of his Introduction to this book; it is a certain class of Kond women, notably the Kuttia Konds and the Konds round Nimgiri, who wear it. Gadaba women wear, not a belt, but a bustle made of many separate cords lashed together; this certainly gives them 'a strange appearance'. Juang women formerly wore belts made of a great number of little earthen cubes strung on cords. Cowrie belts are still common among the northern Murias.

Page 80, *line* 35. Cowries seem to have come back on the market again; I have seen them on sale in the bazaars and have noticed many new cowrie belts and fringes for the bison-horn head-dress. For notes on the use of the cowrie, see Grigson's communication to *Man* (Vol. XL, p. 159) on the subject, and my article, 'The Use of Cowries in Bastar State' in the same journal (Vol. XLII, pp. 121ff).

Page 81, *line* 11. Marias have told me that they distinguish two kinds of bison horn. Those of inferior quality are all-black in colour. The better type are white from the root to the middle and then dark to the tip; nowadays such horns fetch anything up to twenty rupees—sometimes a bullock is given in exchange for a fine pair. Marias go all the way from Dantewara into the Jeypore zamindari to obtain them.

Before leaving their village for a dance Maria youths often promise a fowl to Mahaprabhu, the Village Mother and the Departed saying 'Save us from hostile magic and the evil eye, and see that no feathers fall from our head-dresses. Let the drums give a good sound; let them not be broken'.

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After the Census, the Marias took the house-numbering boards outside their villages and sacrificed pigs to them in order to avert the danger of numbering the people

[End Plate Y]

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THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

Penda is not common among the Muria; it is practised only by those living in the hilly country near the Raughat and in the Abujhmar foothills of the south. *Dippa* and *parka* are the special Muria methods. They are, of course, transitional forms of cultivation from the very primitive *penda* to ordinary plough-agriculture, for they require the use of cattle.

In a *dippa* clearing the trees and bushes are cut in February after the Kare Pandum, when Tallur Muttai is offered a hollow bamboo split down the middle, before which cutting is taboo. The wood is spread over the clearing and left to dry. For *parka*, the wood is cut elsewhere and carried to the field in a shouldered carrying-pole called *asur* or *bhārni*; it is thrown onto the ground and spread fairly evenly across the field.

Before cutting the first *parka*, the Kaser-Gaita spends the night with all the men of the village in the ghotul to ensure that none of them approach their wives who, as menstruating creatures, are always potentially dangerous. He himself cooks and eats apart. In the morning they go to the village shrine and offer sacrifice to all the deities connected with the village, especially remembering Mother Earth and the Departed, saying, 'Let the harvest be good, and let no ill befall us'.

The Gaita then cooks the head of the goat or pig that was sacrificed before the shrine, and small portions are distributed. He sends the chelik to cut the wood. As they first swing their axes they cry *Kiddari pudo*—referring to the genitals of the well-omened kiddari bird. The villagers bring burnt rice, soot from the bottom of their cooking-pots, water and gourds. When the wood has been cut the Gaita says, 'Give the chelik some food', and the villagers smear the boys' faces with soot and force a little burnt rice into their mouths.

FIG. 1. Kuvi digging-stick of iron
Length 1' 7"

All are now free to cut the wood for their fields. From this point we may treat the two types of cultivation together. Indeed *dippa* often shades off into *parka*, for where there are not enough trees in a *dippa* clearing, a supplementary supply has to be cut elsewhere and brought as for *parka*.

In some villages there is a ceremonial burning of a small patch of *parka* at the time of the Wijja Pandum; I describe this in detail in Chapter XXIV. In other places, the ritual of the first firing is done at the time just before the rains. The Kaser-Gaita sleeps as usual in the ghotul and then goes with the chelik to his own field. He offers liquor to the local gods, and starts the burning with a smouldering bit of paddy rope taken from the ghotul fire.[1] The other villagers come and all light their own fires from this.

To spread the ashes evenly over the field, the Muria use a long rake called the *korlat* or *balla* (*dhosna* in Halbi). This is simply a very long pole with a board attached to the end. It is, in Muria riddle, 'the snake that wriggles all over the field'. They wear *karpunj* sandals of sambhar hide or wooden shoes called *katwah* to protect their feet from the hot ground, none the less bearable for the burning sun at the hottest time of the year. The urine turns dark and burns and for a few days the whole tribe endures a sort of urethritis. 'The town people suffer for sex, but we for our field-work', as a man at Phulpar explained.

[1] The Juang keep a fire burning night and day in their *mandagarh* dormitory, and usually ignite their clearings from it.

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224 796 787 ceremonial hunts are held before most of the greater festivals, and their success or failure augurs a good or a bad harvest. The Muria generally take a Siraha medium with them to discover with divine assistance where game is to be found, and before starting they worship their bows and arrows. They gather under a saja tree on the path leading to the jungle, and place the bows and arrows across the way. They offer aonra rings and stand praying, 'Look Mahapurab, look Kadrengal, look Tallur Muttai, look all ye Departed, we go hunting, will we get anything?' To this the Siraha medium replies for the god, 'Unless I help, you won't get even a squirrel'. Then they say again, 'Let us not return empty; if we get anything, we will reward you with an egg or chick; if we fail, we will abuse you. If we cannot trust you for so little, how can we trust you to give us rice and kodon?'

Then the Gaita plucks a tendu or saja leaf, and puts on it a spider's web. He goes to every member of the party and wipes his face of dirt or sweat, smearing it on the leaf and saying, 'With this we remove all evil of witch or ghost; so may we have good hunting'. When he has thrown the leaf away, the hunters pick up their bows and arrows and go towards the jungle without looking back.

224 796 The Muria also go for a ceremonial hunt before the appointment of a new Gaita, who can only be appointed if they succeed in killing a female deer.

776 The god of hunting is generally called Kadrengal, the husband of Tallur Muttai. The same story is told in the Central Provinces of Mahadeo and Parvati.

> Long ago Kadrengal went into the jungle to make a plough. Tallur Muttai prepared the midday meal, but her husband was absorbed in his work and did not return. Tallur Muttai got very angry; she made a tiger out of straw, putting a wooden spoon as tail and a cooking-pot for the head. She covered it with a blanket and with lamp-black made stripes all over it. Then she said to the creature, 'Go and find my husband'. The tiger went to the place where Kadrengal was working and roared at him, but Kadrengal was not afraid and threw chips of the wood from his plough at it saying, 'Go, dogs, and drive that thing away'. The chips of wood turned into wild dogs and chased away the tiger. Since then hunters have worshipped Kadrengal and have held the jungle dog as sacred.

At Phunder the Muria said that before hunting they worshipped one or other of the Rau of the neighbouring forests. Here live Khotela Rau, Markhund Rau, Khamma Rau and Durga Rau. Each hunter worships the god that was chosen long ago by his ancestors, but should at any time his ancestors not help him then he changes and worships one of the other three. Every three years a hunter should make sacrifices to his god. If he fails to do so the god will take the form of some wild animal and attack him. It is said that those who worship Markhund Rau and Durga Rau are generally the most fortunate.

[782] At the end of a successful hunt, especially when it is a ceremonial hunt, certain parts of the animal must be removed and offered to Kadrengal, the Departed, and any other local gods whose assistance has been invoked. The Gaita sacrifices a small bit of the liver, the tip of the tail and tongue, and the man who made the kill places his bow and arrows or gun in front of the Pot of the Departed in his house and makes similar offerings to his ancestors.

224 841 A man must observe chastity and fast the night before he goes to hunt. As he goes he must carefully watch the omens. He must meticulously observe the prescribed taboos. Hunting is particularly sensitive to the contagion of

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times be of very great length. In Kuntpadar there were two measuring over 21 feet long. 226

The *dhir* is an elaborate and beautifully constructed trap, from four to eight feet long and one and a half feet high. The bamboo slats are very fine and set close together. Entrance to the trap is by a series of small doors with spiral staircases going inwards and upwards with bamboo points facing in to prevent egress. When the fish have entered—and the *dhir* is only used for the smallest creatures—they are shaken out of a small hole at the top left-hand corner. In a riddle this trap is described, '*Natânak korinta murwus tagat ke pashinta*: It goes in behind and comes out through the roof', or 'It eats with four mouths and relieves through the fifth'. 227 [524]

A special arrow with a detachable head is sometimes used (Fig. 12). The arrow-head after sticking in the fish is pulled out of its socket but remains attached to the shaft by a cord. The shaft remains as a float, and is easily recovered.

Ceremonial beats for fish are held before the eating of the new mangoes. The chelik gather poisonous leaves and roots from the forest and throw them into the water. The fish are stupefied and float to the surface and are then easily collected. They are distributed among the villagers, who eat them with the new mangoes. 226 278

Many different roots and leaves are used as fish-poison. At Phunder they gave us the names of the fruit of the mode tree, the khuni plant and kurra bark. These three are powdered, mixed together and thrown into the water. Women are not supposed to go into the water when this is done.

Before fishing the Muria invoke the Yer Kanyang (Water Maiden), asking for success and promising a token present. When the first fish is caught they say, 'Whatever ill may be, from widow, witch, from squint or evil eye, be on you'. They spit on it and throw it back into the water. If there is a very successful catch, they may sacrifice a goat or pig on the bank of the river in honour of the Water Maiden. 226 776 782

XI. Liquor

To the Muria liquor-drinking is both a duty and a pleasure. Mahua spirit is a duty because it must be offered to the gods at every festival, at the naming of a child, at a marriage, at a funeral. But the juice of the sago-palm, and even landa rice-beer (where that is taken), is only for pleasure. I will consider duty first. 273

The mahua tree is a source of food and oil as well as of liquor, and for this reason is greatly honoured. The tree, says Dalton, 'is held sacred by the Gonds, and truly no product of nature has greater claims on their gratitude'.[1] The Muria place a branch of the tree in the centre of the marriage booth; they lay the dead to rest beneath its shade; it is taboo to cut it in a clearing for shifting cultivation; as a source of alcoholic refreshment it was discovered by Lingo himself. Like the Gond and Baiga, the Muria are bound to offer it on every ceremonial occasion; the clan-god demands it, the Village Mother can never have enough, there is no better means of keeping the Departed content and quiet.[2] 273 824

In the ghotul, a donation of mahua spirit must be brought by a young boy aspiring to chelikhood; its consumption is a necessary feature of an election 273 883

[1] R. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 281.
[2] The Koya put a mahua leaf in the hand of a new-born child.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 52.

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824 538 buried by their mother. Almost immediately the seven sisters ran away, and when the mother could not find them, she went to the place where the placenta was buried and let the milk from her breasts fall upon it. As the days went by there gradually grew up from the placenta a tree which was full of milk. This was the sago-palm that was born from milk and always [524] gives milk. There is a riddle—'Milk comes from the horns of the buffalo'.

Another story comes from Pharasgaon. Long ago there were eleven brothers and one day as they went hunting in the jungle they grew very thirsty. They came to a group of palm trees and rested in their shade. The youngest brother looked up at the tree and said, 'This is a very fine tree. Surely there is water hidden in its branches! I can see a pot tied there. Who can climb up and get it?' Each of the brothers tried to climb the tree and failed, for when they were nearly at the top they saw that the pot was full of blood. But the youngest boy made a rope of siari fibre and climbed up and when he looked in the pot the juice appeared to him as milk. He brought it down and they all drank of it. The ten elder brothers fell senseless but the youngest boy was intoxicated with pleasure. But he grew afraid thinking that his brothers would die. Then his god said to him, 'Offer a pig to the Gorga Kanyang and they will recover'. He sacrificed a pig and his brothers sat up again.

•[782] This is the origin of the sacrifices that are made to the tree before it is tapped. It is believed that if no offerings are made the juice turns into blood and makes the people ill. If offerings are withheld for a long time, the tree dries up.

In the Chota Dongar area, the Hill Maria of the Abujhmar and the Muria of their immediate neighbourhood trace the palm to Tallur Muttai or Mother Earth herself. At the beginning of the world, Tallur Muttai came with Kadrengal (whom some call her brother and some her husband) to the forest of Bastar. Kadrengal was innocent of sexual desire, and so Tallur Muttai created sago-palms with the hope that their juice would excite him. When Kadrengal first went to tap the trees, he tied a thread from the cut peduncle down to a hole which he dug below, but the wind blew it to and fro and the juice was scattered. Then Tallur Muttai taught him how to tie a gourd to catch the juice and place a leaf to guide it safely. Kadrengal drank a great quantity; desire came to him; and he went to Tallur Muttai.

But the Hill Maria of Jhargaon and Nalnar say that the palms originated when the seven Kanyang, daughters of Bhagavan, came down to Singardip (the world) to bathe. They combed their hair, and wherever their hairs fell the trees sprang up. They give the names of three of the Maidens of the sago-palm—Fuse Kanyang, Ganganangi Kanyang and Kondakalbuli Kanyang.

245 The palms are carefully guarded. Sometimes a large bamboo mat is tied round the trunk; sometimes bundles of thorns are placed to deter the thief. The owners sometimes live in little leaf-huts built below the trees in order to guard them. The tree is climbed by a long bamboo pole which hooks on to a branch at the summit. The side-shoots of the pole are not removed and these serve as the steps of the ladder. When not in use it is removed and kept in a house or in some hiding-place in the jungle. Sometimes a large loop is made at the end of the ladder and it fixes on to a bamboo hook which is tied to the tree.

This is the method of extracting the juice. The ends of the flowering spadices are cut and hollow bamboos, gourds or earthen pots are fixed where they can catch the flow of sap. Bamboos or gourds are simply tied to the tree, but a pot may be fixed in position with a couple of poles below it tied round the trunk and fixed together supported by a string tied to a bough above. The pot is placed inside a basket and its mouth tied to the spadix, to the end

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MURIA RELIGION

The Gods of the Home

Among the Muria, specially those towards the east and round Kondagaon, there is a definite belief that certain gods are attached to men and women and go about with them sharing their life and helping when help is needed. At Kanera the Muria said that Dokara Deo lives with men and aids them in distress, while Kondi or Lagar Deo lives with women. At Dongrigura the Pujari said that the gods themselves do not accompany men everywhere but 'their shadows come to them on the wind' always ready to help in danger. At Karanji the people said that whatever god receives special honour rewards his worshippers by living with them but that Budha Deo, Kondi Deo and Lagar Deo, who came with the Raja of Bastar from Warangal to protect him, are the special gods who go here and there to guard human beings.

The fact that this belief is mainly confined to the more sophisticated (though still truly Muria) villages near Kondagaon suggests that it is a Hindu importation along the main road from the Central Provinces.

Kondi Deo goes with a girl[1] to her husband's house on the day she is married. After the birth of the first child, any misfortune that comes is attributed to this god and the family has to promise to worship him on condition that he troubles them no more. They wait for a year and then the woman's married sisters come to visit her and subscribe sufficient money to buy a pig.

On a Saturday the house is cleaned and the next morning a *chok* pattern is made in the compound with rice-flour, in the middle of which some rice is placed. A small earthen pot is put there and a knife. The head of the family offers incense and makes the pig eat the rice saying, 'O Kondi Deo, protect and preserve my family and children. It is for their sake that this offering is made to you, and we will repeat it every second year'. When the pig has eaten the rice, the husband of either the eldest or the youngest sister kills it. They cook the pig and invite the village elders to the feast. A pit is dug inside the house into which, when the feast is over, the leaf-plates, the pig's bones and even the water in which the cooking-pots are washed, must be thrown. They then hang the earthen pot and the knife near the Pot of the Departed.

The worship of Lagar Deo is not unlike that of Narayan Deo to whom the Lara pig is dedicated in the Central Provinces.[2] Lagar Deo is also a special god of women and is indeed often identified with Kondi Deo. He first lives with the mother of a household, but after the marriage of the eldest daughter he goes with her to her new home. When her child is born he first troubles the mother and then goes to each of her married sisters and troubles their female children. When they decide to appease him they ask all the female members of the family, sisters, sister's daughters, grand-daughters, all of them, and

her. The Koyi dance is an imitation of Bhimadev's pursuit of his enemies); R. B. Bainbridge, 'The Saoras of the Rajmahal Hills', *Mem. ASB.* Vol. II, pp. 468.

Other legends about Bhimsen may be found in *North Indian Notes and Queries*, Vol. II, pp. 29 and 133 (for Bhimsen's romance with a Devi); A. Cunningham, *Archaeological Reports*, Vol. XXII, p. 53 (the pillar of Asoka near Betiya locally regarded as Bhimsen's walking-stick); ibid., Vol. XVI, p. 16 (the Iron pillar at Rakhra known as the pole of the bullocks of Bhimsen); an interesting and well-told story in R. A. Stamdale, *Scenes* (Calcutta, 1887), p. 97.

[1] Among the Uraon, Asherad and her companion Jeda are the special deities of women. Once in a generation, every family must perform a ceremony for the well-being of its female children. As in Bastar, all female relatives and their husbands attend. For a full description, see S. C. Roy, *Oraon Religion and Customs* (Ranchi, 1928), pp. 65ff.

[2] See *The Baiga*, pp. 409ff. and articles by Shamrao Hivale and Durga Bhagwat in *Man in India*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 92–129.

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diagnosed the reason in the failure of the boy's father to sacrifice a pig to the Yer Kanyang as he had promised to do after a good catch of fish. 776

A bride going from Amasara to Nayanar to be married gave the Water Maidens in a river she crossed two rings: 'As we give rings to our motiari she gave, for the Maidens of the Water are also motiari.' What is called the Neyi Maur or the first wedding crown, worn when haldi is put on the body of bride and bridegroom, is thrown into the river after the marriage, for the Kanyang of the water. After the cowhide for a drum has been soaked in water, offerings are made to her for fear she has been defiled. This Kanyang, who is called Yer Kanyang, Julan Kanyang and sometimes Bisran Kanyang, like all such beings is sometimes touchy and may attack men in the form of a crocodile. When this happens, the villagers must give her large gifts, a pig, eggs, seven rings of aonra, red powder for her forehead and bangles for her wrists. In Matawal they said that when they went to fish they always remembered the Bisran Kanyang and when they got a good catch gave her such feminine finery as they thought she would like. Bisran Kanyang is said to give special help to witches. [782]

Another Kanyang of the water, called Ghat Kanyang, lives in the place where people bathe and draw water. When they take an Anga to bathe it at its annual festival they make offerings to this Kanyang saying, 'Be with us to help us. Here we drink water, here our children bathe. Let there be no disease, let no witch overlook the water; protect us and we will worship you every year'.

Bahi Kanyang lives in very small streams and is offered bangles made of weeds and other gifts to ensure good rain and plenty of water in the rice-fields. Chapar Kanyang, the Maiden of the salt-lick, lives in the place where cattle go to lick the salty earth, and there every year the Bhum-Gaita goes with the villagers to make the usual offerings in order to free the cattle from disease.

Kanyang of the fields, such as Berha Kanyang, preside over the crops. When the rice is ripening the Muria offer a pig for the village and a chicken for each house so that the grain may be good, undamaged by wild animals and not destroyed by witches. In Gudla people said that there were two Kanyang in the fields; one called Wujri is benevolent and ensures a good crop; the other, Bagri Kanyang, is responsible when the crop fails. In Matawal, the Maiden of the field was called Ras Kanyang and at Binjhli, Dhand Kanyang. Here they said that at harvest time the Gaita went to every field with chickens, vermilion and the new rice and offered it to Dhand Kanyang and Dhand Rau. Only when this had been done could they cut the crop.

In the forest lives Sukhli Kanyang in her little hut. Should a cow wander near, Sukhli Kanyang catches it and sucks the milk.

The Kanyang of the sago-palm, which was originally a feather-tuft in a motiari's hair, is described elsewhere.[1] This Mur Kanyang, as she is sometimes called, gives juice for three years 'just as a girl can enjoy herself for three years protected by Lingo in the ghotul'. Then she 'marries' and the juice ceases to flow. This Kanyang is subject to a menstrual period during which no one should drink the juice. Regular offerings are made to her when a tree is tapped for the first time.

Local Gods

In addition to the gods whose cult is more or less universal throughout the Muria country, there are many local gods who have generally come into being as a result of a dream or some magician's diagnosis of the cause of a calamity.

[1] See p. 55.

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796 As they did so they all yelled at the animals, 'Don't trouble us or we'll give you nothing next time'. One pig refused to eat—it had been offered as a fine: the donor's wife was a witch—and this showed the enormity of the offence which it was expected to condone. But the people did not take it back; they cried, 'We offered it willingly, but you refused, yet we give it all the same'. One man asked for a son, but they shouted to the gods, 'No, give him a daughter'.

[411]

[531]

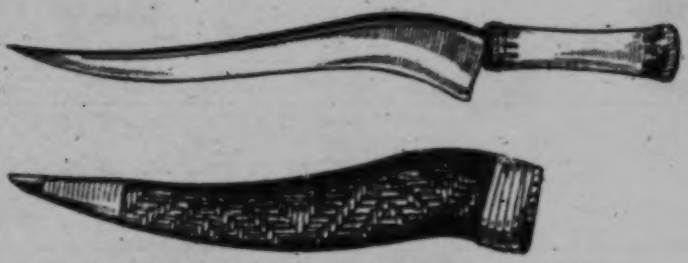

FIG. 32. Muria knife and sheath, of a type often used in sacrifice

796 After the animals had been fed, the priest offered three brass rings for three men who had died during the past year, saying 'Let them now be mingled with
782 the Departed'. Then the animals were killed. The priest put his knife upright between the toes of his right foot, plucked some of the feathers, cut off the head of the chick and sprinkled the blood over the rice and the gods. He killed the pigs by holding them down firmly and sawing off the heads, which he placed facing outwards before the line of rice. As the first pig was killed the worshippers stood with folded hands crying, 'Let the village folk be well; let there be good crops this year; let our animals, cows, pigs, goats and hens be well.' As they killed the second pig, they cried, 'Though it didn't eat, show whether you accept it or no'. They watched eagerly to see how many times the automatic action of the muscles would open the mouth of the decapitated head. Slowly the mouth opened and shut three times and the people were pleased, for this was a sign that the penalty pig had been accepted and all was well.

Similar offerings were made to all the gods, or at least a little blood was sprinkled on them. After a pause, the priest offered the mango, char and karmata fruits, cutting them in half, and removing the stones.

796 Now the women and motiari approached and the Anga went dancing to meet them. He stood before them, and they offered him liquor—'When a Gondi god drinks even one cup of liquor, he talks and dances very well', said one of my guides. Then the chelik picked up their big dhol drums and danced in a long straight line, shuffling to and fro, drumming very vigorously and crying loudly as they changed their direction. The women and girls also danced in a line, and all the Sirsha-meditatis began to throw themselves about and play and dance, generally carrying one of the gods in their hands. A Naitami boy had come to the wrong place and he picked up the Gutal Lalu and was dancing with it. But the Poyami people resented this, and took it from him with loud abuse.

The dancing, drumming and drinking continued till sundown, when the meat with the fruit and rice was cooked. Then the people—men and women—

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Plate XLVI

196
187
182

Hivale, prophesying above the dedicated bull

[p. 224 (8)]

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Plate XLVII

796
782

The sacrifice

Priests [illegible] other
deities fill their
hands with blood

[p.224(c)]

DREAMS

your mat to sleep on'. So I had to get up and give him the mat on which we were sleeping together. I was very sorry, but when I came back, she took off her sari and spread it for me to lie on, and I covered her with my blanket. 154

In Markabera the head of the chelik said, 'If my ghotul-wife is away, I dream of sleeping with her. I chase her and often have her'. He sometimes experienced orgasm during such dreams. 'I once dreamt that I was going to dance in another village. I walked along the road with a girl I had always wanted. That night I was able to sleep with her in the other village.'

A chelik at Chandabera said, 'We generally dream of our earliest loves in the ghotul, for these are girls whom we never forget. We dream that they are sleeping by our side or running away from us. Sometimes we dream that we have gone out fishing with them or that we are on our way to a marriage dance'.

The seriousness with which the Muria treat their dreams and the reality they ascribe to them is clearly shown in the precautions taken the following day. I have already referred to various cures for nightmare. I will add a few more. At Bhopna a Muria said, 'If I dream that I have gone down under the water, I consult the Siraha and he says that it means that an evil ghost is coming. This once happened to me, so I got seven different kinds of wood and made a bonfire of them by the bank of a stream. I put some gur and ghee on the fire. Then I and my wife went round it three times, entered the water and ducked below it. We took off our old clothes and left them there on the bank, dressed in new clothes and went home without looking round.' This was rather a drastic and expensive cure. An easier means of averting the possible danger of a dream is this from Chingnar: 787 782

A dream of a fight between two people suggests danger from black magic. To avert this the figure of a man with a bow and arrow should be made with grass and a bad egg, a pig or a chicken should be offered to it. The little image should be thrown away outside the village and the danger will disappear. [154]

Gaitru of Chaniyagaon once dreamt,

A beautiful woman came to my children and said to them, 'I am going to devour you, because your parents give me nothing to eat'. The next day my children fell ill, and the Siraha declared that their sickness was due to Lagar Deo, who was angry because the customary offering to him three years after the first child had not been made, and he therefore wanted to kill all my children. So I dedicated two pigs to Lagar Deo to be allowed to wander freely and killed three years later. Once I had done this my children recovered. 787 753 782

At Palaar, the Suel once dreamt that he was climbing up a huge stone. Suddenly he saw a chaprasi, he was frightened and tried to run away. He fell down and broke his teeth. When he awoke he found he had fever and only recovered after he had sacrificed a pig and made other offerings.

In Chandabera, a Muria jealous of the happiness of the chelik performed hostile magic against the ghotul. The Sirdar dreamt that one of the boys had died and his corpse was being carried away for burial. Soon afterwards he himself got an attack of fever. 'He was sleeping at home and dreamt that a chelik came to him saying, 'Come, let us go to dance at a wedding'. The Sirdar replied, 'I am suffering from fever and cannot go'. The chelik said, 'The fever has been sent you by such and such a person, you must drive it

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

back again'. Then the boy awoke and the following day sent for the Siraha, who agreed that his illness was due to magic. They then took a pig and chicken outside the village and sacrificed them saying, 'Are you going away or not?' Both pig and chicken ate the rice offered them, and this was taken to mean that the danger from the magic was averted. The boys feasted on the pig and chicken and the Sirdar recovered from his fever. It was generally believed that the chelik who visited him in his dream was Lingo Pen himself.

Naitami Dole, a Muria of Kokori, described an experience when he was the Sirdar of his ghotul.

> One night I dreamt that I was having intercourse with a motiari. The next morning I found myself suffering from fever, so I called the Siraha to ask what was the matter. He told me that an enemy had sent the motiari to me by his magic. So I went down to the bank of the river and made seven circles on the bank putting rice, powdered egg-shells and ashes in them with an egg in the middle circle for the Yer Kanyang. Then I recovered.

To see one's house burning in a dream means that black magic, particularly in its very dangerous form of the *agindaw*, or arrow of fire, is going to be sent against one. To avert it a chicken should be sacrificed and a small image made of *dab* grass carried out across the village boundary and thrown away.

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boys and girls. They dance clasped in each other's arms; they go about together, chelik with his arm round the neck of motiari. How revealing are Plates LXXV and XCI. In one a chelik lies on a cot with his arm on his motiari's shoulder, while she sits almost on top of him making leaves. They were not posed for the photo, and they showed no embarrassment at my approach with the mysterious camera, even though they were from a village I did not know well. In the other Plate two chelik and a motiari are listening to the gramophone outside my tent. They are completely absorbed in it and in each other. One of the boys embraces the girl with both his arms. You would not see this natural innocence in the more 'advanced' parts of aboriginal India.

But this refreshing freedom never degenerates into immodesty in public. It would be unthinkable for a chelik to dance naked—as I have seen older men do—in the presence of women or of his elders. The motiari never indulge in the cheerful vulgarity of the old women at a wedding. A chelik never catches hold of a girl immodestly in general company, though he will embrace her and walk with his arms about her. The great festival dances, though the air is full of romantic suggestion and the older men dance with the greatest licence, are conducted by chelik and motiari with complete decorum.

The sympathetic reader will realize how hopeless it is to bring our cut-and-dried judgements of sexual morality to bear upon a situation such as this. But he will also realize that even on his own standards the ghotul cannot be called immoral in the sense that it has no rules or laws or that it ignores those it has. Its regulations are as far-reaching and as strict as our own, and they are often better kept. For the rules are not imposed from without, but have been made by the ghotul-members themselves. Thus they are reasonable, adapted to the actual situation, and so easy to obey.

It is curious that while a Western visitor to a Muria village, if he is of a Puritan turn, will probably be chiefly concerned about the pre-nuptial relations of the children, the Hindu visitor—who is, of course, by far the more frequent—will be scandalized by the casual attitude of the Muria towards cows. Many years ago earnest efforts were made by Hindu reformers in the State to stop cow-sacrifice, and still today—though the majority of State officials preserve an admirable restraint in interfering with tribal customs—landlords, merchants, schoolmasters and travellers do what they can to put an end to the practice. But, except for a few centres where Hindu influence is strong, bulls and cows continue to be sacrificed and eaten all over the northern part of the State. The Muria cannot believe that this is wrong, for the gods demand it. There is nothing in their culture or mythology to forbid it—and indeed we here have a good example of the difficulty of importing a new idea into a system that has no provision for it. Yet if the Muria ever does ponder about 'moral' problems it is this that perplexes him and not any question about pre-nuptial chastity.

Stealing is generally condemned, but it is licensed on some special occasions. The chelik are expected to steal a cock when they take the newly-wedded bride and bridegroom to bed; they appear to have similar licence when they perform ceremonial dances round the village.

The incidence of crime is very low. An experienced police officer, who had served in the ghotul area for twelve years, told me that in all this time there had been no case of murder, riot, assault, hurt, or rape in connexion with the ghotul. There has not been a single case of rape against a Muria, though non-aboriginals have been arrested for raping Muria women. It is a remarkable thing that most of the crime in the Kondagaon and Narayanpur Tahsils occurs

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
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Bison Horn Maria

brass rings and beads and placed them on the corpse; the men brought bits of cloth. The members of the household fasted from the time of the old man's death until he was cremated. The ceremonies were marked by violent manifestations of grief. When the bamboo bier was brought to the house, the wives of the Waddai, Gaita and Hanagunda fell upon it and lay there. They said that this meant that they too wanted to be taken out and burnt, a curious echo of the Sati tradition. Straw was spread on the bier and when the corpse had been placed there, bits of cloth were laid on it by the male relatives present. The women gathered round the corpse again, kissing it and weeping bitterly. It had been lying with its legs towards the door of the house, but now it was lifted up by the bearers and its position changed so that the head was pointing to the door. They touched the door thrice with it saying, 'You made this house, come here again in your next birth'.

Then, led by the drummers, the corpse was carried out to the cremation-ground. The grand-daughter with her hair undone followed immediately behind the bier throwing rice upon it as she went along. As they passed a path that crossed theirs, they dropped a little rice so that if any other ghost came he would eat it and go away. Everyone went to the funeral. Menstruating women are not normally allowed to attend, though sometimes they may come if they stand at a little distance.

When the party reached the pyre, they went round it anti-clockwise once and placed the bier on the ground. Once again the women fell upon the corpse weeping and kissing it. They lay down beside the pyre and had to be pushed away before the business of the funeral could proceed.

Then one of the women put a little tobacco in the mouth of the corpse. The body was placed upon the pyre. Some of the bits of cloth with which it was covered were left there; the rest was distributed between the drummers and the relatives by marriage. The Hanagunda removed the packets of rice which had been tied to the waist of the corpse and threw them to left and right. The body was entirely covered with a cloth and the Hanagunda ripped this open just over the mouth. A piece of grass which had been brought from the roof of the house was put into the mouth of the corpse and

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possession of a dancing outfit that led Wango to murder his betrothed Paike. But when Alami Mata had his splendid bison-horn head-dress, which he loved and cared for with devotion, stolen he did not seek out and kill the thief but was so miserable that he hanged himself. In several cases disputes about the right of a girl to visit her mother's house led to murder. In as many others it led to suicide. Sometimes a girl hangs herself because she is not allowed to go home. Sometimes the husband hangs himself out of loneliness and misery when his wife deserts him for her parents. A public insult caused Marvi Hinga to murder his mother-in-law. Had he been of a different temperament like Markami Pandu, who was abused and insulted by his wife for not working properly, he would have hanged himself. Fatigue drives some Maria to murder in a fit of exhausted rage, but others hang themselves instead.

Some sick people murder the magician who they believe has sent affliction upon them. Others commit suicide in order to escape from him. The Maria themselves identify homicide and suicide in so far that both lead to a violent disturbance of village life. Both involve them in various supernatural dangers, and the ghosts of both can be dealt with in much the same way.

R. S. Cavan discusses the relations of widow suicide and human sacrifice. The voluntary sacrifice of widows at the funerals of their husbands has been recorded in India and China, throughout the central portion of Negro Africa and among certain aristocratic American Indian tribes. These areas are also the areas of human sacrifice.

> In the Orient the sacrifices are a matter of history and are often recorded as accompanying the widow suicide. Among the preliterates, the sacrifices were noted in conjunction with the suicides by early white observers. Moreover, in few parts of the world was human sacrifice found except in the groups which also had Sati. Human sacrifice and Sati went hand in hand.[1]

The Maria do not have the custom of widow suicide, and human sacrifice is equally rare among them.

I will begin, as in the case of the homicides, with general statistics about suicide in Bastar during the last 10 years.

[1] R. S. Cavan, *Suicide* (Chicago, 1928), p. 72.

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Grigson quotes an interesting example reported by the police from Madder in the Bhopalpatnam Zamindari. On the night of 13 June 1937, a Mohammedan woman asleep in her courtyard was slightly wounded with a sharp instrument, and woke to see what she believed to be two Maria running away. 'The police enquiry elicited information that many Maria in Kutru Zamindari before sowing try to get some human blood, especially of women, to mix with their seed. Their usual method is to go to distant villages by night and inflict slight wounds on sleeping women with a knife or arrow. They then take the blood-stained weapon home, and wash it with water, in which they steep their rice seed before sowing, confident of securing thereby a bumper crop. Before wounding their victim they offer near her cot a little rice and turmeric; such an offering was found near the Madder woman's cot'.[1]

Cases of human sacrifice are not common, and in the whole of Bastar only 3 have been proved in the last 10 years, though there is reasonable ground to suppose that in 2 other cases, which did not proceed to a conviction, such sacrifice was the real motive of the crime.[2]

The most notorious example of human sacrifice occurred in 1940. The Raj Gond Zamindar of Bhopalpatnam had been removed from office because he was insane, and his nephew wanted to succeed him. He made a number of representations to the Darbar which were rejected. As a last resort, he decided to offer a sacrifice to the family deity, Bhumsaria Deo, whose temple is situated in a remote part of the Zamindari. A fatherless child about five years old was kidnapped and taken to the shrine. The usual worship was performed and red powder applied to the image of the god. A chicken was killed. The boy's hands and feet were washed, and the Zamindar's nephew himself applied red powder to the child's forehead and put into his mouth rice that had been offered to the deity. He prayed with folded hands that he should be given the Zamindari. He then, with the help of his assistants, laid the child on the ground before the

[1] Grigson, op. cit., p. 221.
[2] The memory of the Meriah sacrifices is preserved in a game played by the Maria and Muria of North Bastar. In this Meriah Karsana, a gang of boys kidnap their victims and 'sacrifice' them to an imaginary goddess.

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image, and with a long sharp knife cut his throat until the head was completely severed from the body. This is the normal method of sacrificing a pig or chicken. The crime was discovered and the would-be Zamindar and two of his assistants were hanged.

The second case, which occurred among the Bison-horn Maria, I will describe immediately. The third example was in 1934 when a Muria of the north, who had not been getting good harvests, was accused of vowing to the goddess of his irrigation tank that, if the winter crops were good, he would offer her a child. That year he had unusually good crops, and in fulfilment of his vow he is said to have killed his nephew, an orphan boy of fourteen years, whom he had reared from infancy. The accused was sentenced to death by the Sessions Judge, but was acquitted by the Appellate Court, and the murder went undiscovered.

A very mysterious crime occurred in Jhoriabadhan in 1923. A little boy named Sukra about two-and-a-half years old disappeared and was never seen again. An elderly Maria of the village was accused of his murder, but was acquitted for lack of evidence. I have little doubt that this was a case of human sacrifice. It was proved in Court that about a month before the child's disappearance the accused told some friends while they were crossing over his embankment that he had promised to sacrifice a male child if the dam did not burst. He warned them that they should not allow their children to pass that way for fear they should fall in. At this stage he was probably thinking that the deity of the tank would herself push a child into the water. But later when this did not happen, he himself probably drowned the child.

IV

THE HUMAN SACRIFICE AT MARDUM

X 674 782 241

Kuhrami Guddi of Mardum near Katakalian had built a tank for irrigating his fields. Finding that he was not getting such good crops as he wanted, he plotted to find a pregnant woman[1] and sacrifice her to the spirits presiding over the

[1] Crimes against pregnant women are probably always motivated by superstition. Some extraordinary examples are found in *A Hangman's Diary*, edited by Albrecht Keller (London, 1928).
In 1577 at Bamberg (Germany) Nicklaus Stuller of Aydtafeld was

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tank, Mirchuk Deo and the Yer Kanyang or Water Maiden.

On Wednesday, 20 April 1938, the usual ceremonies for the newly-born daughter of Guddi's nephew, Hirma, were being celebrated at Guddi's house. About midday a Mahara woman named Bote, who was four months pregnant, came to the house and joined the party. It was suggested later that Guddi had met the woman that morning while he had been engaged on repairs to the village Rest-house. She had been working there and when she left with her axe and crowbar, Guddi followed her and persuaded her to come home with him. Whether it happened just like this or not, it certainly seems probable that Guddi had already determined that Bote was to be his victim. He made her drink rice-beer and when the other visitors prepared to leave, persuaded her to stay on and take some food. The food (since, as a Mahara, Bote would not have eaten from the Maria's hands) was probably more rice-beer and it looks as though Guddi succeeded in making the woman more or less fuddled, for she stayed on in the house till evening and Guddi persuaded her not to go away by promising presents for her children.

Early in the evening Guddi left the house and found his brother Nari, who was joint owner with him of the tank, and his nephew Hirma sitting in a small open shed outside. He told them that he had decided to make a sacrifice of a foetal child, and that Bote was to provide it. It will be noted that the important part of the sacrifice was not the mother so much as the unborn child. Nari later claimed that he tried to dissuade Guddi from this plan, but Guddi, who was the head

drawn out on a sledge and his body was torn thrice with red-hot tongs before he was executed on the wheel. He and two associates had committed eight murders. First he shot a horse-soldier; secondly he cut open alive a pregnant woman in whom was a dead child; thirdly he cut open a pregnant woman in whom was a female child; fourthly he cut open a pregnant woman in whom were two male children. One of his associates said they had committed a great sin and that he would take the infants to a priest for baptism but the other associate, saying that he would act as priest and baptise them, took them by the legs and dashed them to the ground.

In 1530 at Nuremberg Hans Muller aged 60 was executed on the wheel for the murder of his sister who was pregnant. After the murder he "dealt lustfully" with her and buried the body in a field.

In 1661 at Nuremberg Bastian Griibl, a thief, was executed. He confessed to twenty murders and among his victims were five pregnant women. These he had caused to live in debauchery with his companions, then cut them open and cut off the hands of the infants and made candles of the hands to be used in burglaries.

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of the family, said that he would take all responsibility and that he had already prepared the woman by making her drunk.

When it became dark Bote picked up her axe and crowbar, and at last insisted on going home. Guddi said that, as it was dark, he would go with her for part of the way. He took a knife and an axe and persuaded Nari to accompany them. After they had gone some two hundred and fifty yards, Guddi caught hold of the woman and when she began to scream, pressed her throat to silence her. The two men then dragged her about half a mile to the tank. They took her into the water and Guddi pushed her head under and held her there until she was drowned. He then cut open her belly with his knife, half removed the foetus and slit its neck. Nari's nerve seems to have failed him at this point and he ran away home.

Maria knife (Length of blade 10")

Shortly after Nari's return Bote's husband came with a party of neighbours searching for her. He asked Nari if his wife had been there, and he said she had not. Very late at night Guddi returned. His wife asked him where he had been, and he beat her. In spite of his late night, however, Guddi got up very early before dawn, and abused his nephews Hirma and Rainu for over-sleeping. He told them to get up quickly and plough the field by the tank. He went ahead with his bullocks, and the two boys and Nari followed. After ploughing for a little while, Guddi left his bullocks and took the others to the tank. There he showed them the body of Bote floating in the water, and told them that he had killed her as a sacrifice. He pulled the corpse to the bank, and the others saw how the belly had been cut and the foetus partly pulled out and its neck slit. Guddi then persuaded the others to help him carry the corpse to a place nearby called Ital Lata where there was thick undergrowth. That night the four men went again and took the corpse to a hillside in the

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Koder forest some miles away, dragging it along so that it should appear as if a tiger had killed it.

The search for Bote continued. The husband went to everyone in authority in the neighbourhood, and called the villagers to help him, continuing distractedly to search all Friday and Saturday. A Sub-Inspector of Police was touring nearby and his aid was also enlisted. For three days more they searched. On 27 April, a week after the murder, Hirma and Rainu went to the Koder jungle ostensibly to get bamboos, probably really to see what had happened to the corpse. When they returned they said that it had not yet decomposed, and Guddi suggested that they should report that they had noticed a very unpleasant smell in the forest. The next day the villagers went to the place and found the body. It was, however, considerably decomposed and was only identified by the ornaments and combs.

By 1 May the police were in full charge. It is not quite clear what happened, but it seems to me probable that Nari immediately gave his brother away. In the first fright and confusion, Guddi also lost his head. He took the Sub-Inspector to the place where he had hidden Bote's basket, axe and crowbar. He brought from his house some thread, which the woman had given him on the day of her death, and the knife that he had used to kill her. The Sub-Inspector found stains on his loin-cloth and on Nari's cloth, and seized them. The Imperial Serologist later established that the stains on Guddi's clothes were of human blood; those on Nari's could not be determined owing to disintegration.

After his first fright, however, Guddi denied everything, but Nari, who all along seems to have been an unwilling participant in the crime, turned approver. At the trial Guddi declared that on the day of the Chatti ceremony after drinking a great deal of rice-beer, he had become unconscious and had slept till morning. He denied that he went out at dawn; denied that he ever ploughed the land or made the sacrifice. He claimed that the stains on his loin-cloth were due to the red earth of his field, and declared that he showed the Sub-Inspector the woman's possessions, the knife and the thread, only because he was beaten and forced to make a false confession.

There can be no doubt whatever of Guddi's guilt. The

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evidence of Nari alone would have hardly been sufficient, but Guddi's two nephews corroborated it and Hirma was present when Guddi declared his decision to sacrifice his unfortunate victim.

All the circumstantial evidence was against Guddi. There was the blood on his loin-cloth; the condition of the corpse was consistent with death by drowning; none of the bones were fractured and there were no signs that the woman had been killed by a wild animal. Unless Guddi had been concerned in the matter, how did he know where Bote's axe and crowbar were hidden? It may well be that he was forced by the police to reveal their hiding-place, but it is equally clear that what he showed was true. Evidence was led to show that on the day of her death Bote took some thread which she had spun to Guddi's house.

This crime is notable for two things. First the motive is a very deep and ancient one. Nari described at the trial how, as Guddi was drowning the woman, he called on the Mirchuk and the Yer Kanyang by name, telling them that he was fulfilling his vow by sacrificing a pregnant woman, and praying to them to bless his fields and give them increase. Some of the blood was scattered on the ground, and this blood-stained land was ploughed before dawn the following morning in order to ensure its fertility.

The second remarkable point about the case is the extraordinary stupidity of Guddi which cost him his life. He had a whole week in which to wash his loin-cloth, yet he left it marked with the most damaging evidence against him. He could not leave the body alone, but sent his nephews off to inspect it and then told them to make a report. Had he said nothing, it would have been comparatively easy to dispose of the bones so that they would never have been discovered. When the police arrived, he immediately went to pieces and implicated himself so thoroughly that his later protestations of innocence were of no avail. He was sentenced to death and hanged on 5 September 1938.

Westermarck suggests that the ultimate reason of human sacrifice is to effect a sort of life-insurance.

> A comparative study of the practice of human sacrifice shows that human victims are frequently offered in war, before a battle, or during a siege: for the purpose of

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stopping or preventing an epidemic; in order to put an end to a devastating famine; when the earth fails to supply the people with water; with a view to averting perils arising from the sea or from rivers; and in order to prevent the death of some particular person, especially a chief or a king. From these facts I have thought it justifiable to draw the conclusion that human sacrifice is, largely at least, a method of life-insurance, based upon the idea of substitution; and though the human sacrifice offered as a means of putting an end to or averting a ravaging famine and securing an abundant crop has been explained as serving as a magical manure, it may be asked why this particular gruesome kind of manure was chosen if not because human life was in danger.[1]

But in the Bastar cases, there was no danger to life: the sacrifices seem to have been motived by a straightforward desire of gain and to have depended for their efficacy on the power of blood which as the source of life is also a cause of fertility. The connection with irrigation tanks is noteworthy.

V

THE SIRAHA AND HOMICIDE

It is a curious fact that the leaders of the powers of good against the forces of black magic, especially the Siraha and Gunia, seem to cause quite as many murders as the witch or sorcerer.

The Siraha with his magic winnowing-fan and lamp and broomsticks appears in case after case, not always, of course, as the criminal or victim, but as an influential force in the background.

For example, it is the Siraha who diagnoses the cause of death or disease and who, by naming some living person as the author, directly incites to crime. Equally, by his failure to treat a sick person who believes that he is suffering from witchcraft, he may drive him to despair and suicide.

The Siraha is very proud of his position and his connection with the gods. He is extremely touchy, and immediately resents the least hint of criticism. When Markami Ganga

[1] E. Westermarck, 'Methods in Social Anthropology', *J.R.A.I.*, Vol. LXVI (1936), p. 232, and *The Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas* (London, 1912), Vol. I, p. 440. See also R. Karsten, *The Civilization of the South American Indians* (London, 1926), p. 408.

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539 had seen him entering, he knew that he was hiding some-
773 where and so he set fire to the building and went away. The fire did not harm the man, but some of the bird's feathers were burnt. The soul of the clan-god in Gadapal is in that bird, and to this day the bird can be seen, though now it is made of iron, and on its body the marks made by the burns remain.

'The eldest brother then went to Mallawada and lived there. He consulted the Waddai about the death of his sister's child, and it was revealed to him that the girl had been committing adultery with another man, and that on the very day she had bathed after her menstrual period, she
[845] had had intercourse both with her husband and her lover. The result of this was twins. But the Departed were offended at her conduct, and as a result one of the twins died after a few days and the second was killed by the Departed who first took the form of a hare and excited the dogs, and then possessed the dogs and killed the child in the swing'.

Such stories are not mere fairy-tales. They are part of the actual life of the people, vividly believed and actually experienced. To aboriginals who live in such an atmosphere and depend so entirely on the supernatural, the cumbersome and vulgar machinery of human courts of justice seems comparatively unimportant. It is said that many murderers find a sort of relief in going to jail, since they believe that this earthly punishment may save them from the vengeance of the Departed.

782 But as often in the aboriginal world there are regular
837 methods of evading these dangers. If a man wishes to commit adultery, he makes offerings to the Departed and prays, 'Let me not swell with water. Let the sin be on the husband of this girl and not on me', and then he addresses his ancestors, 'Away with you. Go to water and to wind. Go beyond the boundary-line. Do not trouble me whatever happens'.

684 There is no doubt, however, that many Maria are not satisfied with such ceremonies, and that they consider themselves entirely justified in killing a wife who is disloyal. In particular, the discovery of a woman actually in the arms of her lover appears to have so overwhelming an emotional effect that the husband is almost bound to strike

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821 drink, would they become alive and be man and woman.
773 One day while Mahapurub was working in his fields, his wife put the child in a swing and went for water. Lingo stole the child and brought him down to earth. He sacrificed him and offered his blood to the sun and moon and they became alive.

000 Both the Baiga and Muria have stories to account for the disappearance of human sacrifice.

> Now Nanga Baiga and Nanga Baigin had nothing to sacrifice for the steadying of the world. So they took their own three sons and daughters, and were carrying them along. Then they met a jungle hen. 'Where are you going?' she asked. And when she heard, 'You musn't kill your own children. Take two pairs of mine. Offer one pair, and keep the other for breeding'. So said the jungle hen. Then Nanga Baiga lifted one son and daughter out of the kawar and left them with the hen, and put the chickens in instead.
>
> A little later they met a sow. She also begged them not to sacrifice their children, and gave two pairs of sucklings in exchange for two more of the children. Then they met a barking deer, and made a similar exchange.[1]

782 The Muria story runs as follows:—
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773 The Muria was thinking, 'How am I to worship the earth for I have nothing to give her?'. He had one daughter. He covered her whole body with soot to make her black and forced her to walk on all fours like a black cow.

[1] *The Baiga*, p. 315. 'At Nasik, in the Deccan, when cholera appears, a woman of the Marg (menial tribe) is solemnly led out of the city as a scapegoat. She remains outside the city bounds till the next day, when she bathes and returns. The ceremonial, which closely resembles that of bringing a victim to a shrine, doubtless implies an earlier rite of human sacrifice.

'Another rite resembles that of the self-immolation of pilgrims, who used, in former times, to fling themselves, in the name of Siva, over the cliff known as Bhairava Jhamp, near the famous shrine of Kedar Nath in the lower Himalayas. This rite has now been commuted into the paying for the service of a bedi or rope dancer, who slides on a wooden saddle upon a cable hung over a precipitous cliff as a means of propitiating Siva.

'In the form of the "Bihunda" rite the same custom prevails in the Punjab, on the River Sutlej.

'In Baroda also, at the worship of Vagh Deo, the tiger god, a man is covered with a blanket; he bows to the image and walks round it seven times. During this performance the worshippers slap him on the back. He then tries to escape to the forest, pursued by children, who fling balls of clay at him, and finally bring him back, the rite ending with feasting and drinking. The above are instances of attenuated forms of the custom of human sacrifice and immolation which has become intolerable under the conditions of modern society.' Haikerwal, op. cit., pp. 68 f.

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Then he went to the jungle to worship Mother Earth. 782
On the way he met Lingo driving a cow. Lingo said, 539
'O man, where are you going?' 'I am going to worship 773
Mother Earth'. 'What are you going to sacrifice?' 'I have nothing to give but my own daughter and I am going to sacrifice her'. Then Lingo said, 'Give me your daughter, and I will give you my cow'. From that day the Muria have not offered human beings to the Earth Mother but, taught by Lingo, have sacrificed their cattle.

A Bison-horn Maria account of creation tells of the great 773
deluge and how the earth came into existence from mud that dropped from the hairs of the great boars that then lived in the world. There were two deities, Irisirma and Markaraja. They had two daughters, Iro and Palo. The girls both wanted to marry Koyabhimul, but the parents were unwilling and tried to kill the boy. They first sent a great snake to bite him as he returned from the jungle. But the girls warned him in time, and told him to invoke the name of their father and the snake would be unable to harm him. The parents then tried to kill him by asking him to sacrifice a chicken, planning to behead him as he bent down to do so. But the girls again warned him, and the boy said to Markaraja that he must first show him how the sacrifice was to be performed. As the older man bent down, the boy picked up a sword and beheaded him. 'In those days there were few gods and so there were few deaths on earth. The mortality on earth has increased because of the great increase in the number of deities.'

We have already seen how the origin of magic among men is connected with a human sacrifice and cannibalism. The Maria are acquainted with similar stories of the origin of the sun and moon through the sacrifice of a living being. Some of the Maria iron-smelters describe how at the beginning they were unable to extract iron from the ore. They killed a Maria and put his body into the furnace, after which their craft prospered.

Maria folk-tales are full of the usual murders, treacheries 539
and deceits. But it is worth noting that generally these are attributed to outsiders and members of other castes. The Maria themselves usually appear virtuous and honourable.

I do not suppose anyone was ever incited to murder by 000
these stories and legends. I doubt if anyone would ever

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An ingenious attempt to hoodwink the police occurred at Jhoriabadhan in 1923. After the mysterious disappearance of a little boy aged two-and-a-half years the police came to investigate, and the villagers took the constable to the thrashing-floor whence the child had disappeared, and there showed him a boy about six years old. They told him that this was the missing boy and that he had been found wandering in the fields. Even the child's own mother declared that this was the lost boy, and since all the members of the family as well as the villagers supported her, the police went away. There is no doubt, however, that a child did disappear and it is probable that he was offered as a human sacrifice.

In one case, but only one, a prosecution witness was so troubled by his family that he committed suicide. On the whole, however, the Maria appear to co-operate with the police very well. In 88 cases out of 100, they assisted in some way or other. Sometimes they reported the matter at the police station. Sometimes they themselves arrested the murderer and kept him in custody until the police arrived. They co-operated by assisting at the inquest which is held in a village when the police arrive to investigate a suspicious death. In one case the villagers took an active and dangerous part in pursuing a convict who had escaped from jail with the result that one of their number was killed.

TABLE TWENTY-ONE

Illustrating the kind of assistance given to police in 100 cases

Information withheld from police	...	...	12
Homicide reported by villagers	...	...	79
Accused arrested by villagers	...	...	25
Accused gives himself up to police	...	...	9

This was the exciting pursuit of Markami Mundra in 1934. Mundra was convicted in 1933 and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for an act of violence. On 3 May 1934, he escaped from jail with another convict and a proclamation was issued for their arrest. A Sub-Inspector of Police went at once to Gudra, Mundra's own village, and told the people that a reward of fifty rupees had been offered for his

4: Fürer-Haimendorf E-5 (1942-1945) 1948
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compliance with Hindu customs, and "Raj-Gond" reform movements have made their appearance in the Central Provinces.

Various theories have been advanced to explain the distinction between Raj Gonds and the other sections of the Gond peoples. C. B. Lucie-Smith writing of the Raj Gonds of Chanda suggested that either "the epithet Raj was originally applied to royal and noble Gond families, from which the distinction spread to their followers and the governing class generally; or it may describe the leading Gond tribe which in ancient days conquered the land from other aboriginal clans."[1] But Captain Forsyth believed that Raj Gonds are in many cases the descendants of alliances between Rajput adventurers and Gonds, and R. V. Russell quotes this view with qualified approval.[2]

W. V. Grigson on the other hand lays emphasis rather on the social than the historical causes for the distinction and suggests that such names as Raj Gond arose from "the tendency, familiar throughout India, of local groups of primitive races which are gradually being Hinduized to regard themselves and to be accepted by their Hindu neighbours as separate Hindu castes under new names."[3] The situation in Adilabad seems rather to accord with the second suggestion advanced by Lucie-Smith; for here the Raj Gonds do not form a ruling class or even a class of privileged economic status, but an entire tribal group comprising all strata of society from the feudal chiefs down to the poorest labourer. We will see in a later chapter that the once powerful Gond Kings of Chanda belonged to this group, and their kinsmen in the Adilabad hills were as early as the 17th century referred to as Raj Gonds in patents of the Emperor Aurangzeb.

Here the Raj Gonds, far from aspiring to inclusion in the Hindu fold, consider themselves the true exponents of Gond culture and Gond language, and above all of the traditional Gond religion which involves the sacrifice of cows at the rites for the clan-gods. Many of them have never met a Dhurwe Gond, but those who have come in contact with the few groups of Dhurwe Gonds who have recently drifted across the Chanda border, look down upon them as speaking a corrupt form of Gondi intermixed with much Marathi, and as following different customs; somewhat sweepingly and apparently unjustly they assert that the Dhurwe Gonds have no cult of clan deities "only worshipping Bhimana like Kolams."

It seems indeed that the Raj Gonds of Adilabad, who have lived for almost a century and a half under Muslim rule, and have in consequence been less exposed to the influence of the more intolerant exponents of Hinduism, have retained more of their old culture than

1. *Report of the Land Revenue Settlement of the Chanda District. Central Provinces. 1869.* Nagpur 1870, p. 46.
2. *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India.* London 1916. Vol. III. p. 63.
3. W. V. Grigson. *The Maria Gonds of Bastar.* London. 1938 p. 36.